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importance; but that the intentional violation should be condoned, if done with no bad motive; is a principle pregnant with evil, and one which Congress, by approving Mr. Boutwell's course in negotiating the recent loan at a higher rate than that fixed by law, seems to have sanctioned; and their action shows the dangerous tendency against which it behooves us to struggle. Nothing but the same jealous watchfulness against encroachments wrong in principle, even though in effect beneficial, which carried our fathers successfully through their contest for self-government, will enable us to maintain their work; and a constant recurrence to their writings will tend to stimulate our care.

There is one feature of Mr. Frothingham's book which is very annoying to the reader, though it does not injure its value as a book of reference. This is his habit of repeating his text in notes, of giving some quotation more or less at length, and then, in a note which contains the reference to his authority, repeating the same language, with, perhaps, some additions. The simple reference to his authority would seem to have been enough.

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2. — *Myths and Myth-Makers: Old Tales and Superstitions interpreted by Comparative Mythology*. By JOHN FISKE, M. A., LL. B., Assistant Librarian and late Lecturer on Philosophy, at Harvard University. Boston: James R. Osgood and Company. 1873.

MR. FISKE has done the public good service by collecting in a volume of convenient size these various essays which embody the latest results of modern scholarship in regard to the many myths and superstitions that have come down to us from a remote antiquity, together with many ingenious remarks of his own. Most of them had appeared last year in the *Atlantic Monthly*, where they had aroused very general interest in this fascinating subject. Almost all the authorities from which Mr. Fiske quotes will be found entertaining reading, but their number, and very often their size, and the philological reasoning on which they are based, combine to make them less attractive to those readers who instinctively and naturally enough shrink from whatever bears a likeness to a scientific book. Such persons, however, need not fear being dragged into too deep water in the volume before us. Mr. Fiske has been through all that is arid in the work of investigation, and gives us simply the results of his study in a most agreeable form. This he has done without sacrificing accuracy to smoothness; his book can be read with perfect confidence by those who have not the time to look up the various matters for themselves. He has the rare merit of avoiding both error and dulness.

In his first essay Mr. Fiske begins with the mention of one of the greatest victories which scientific investigation has had over popular rumor,—the story of William Tell, which is taken out of history and put back where it belongs, in a misty antiquity as one form of the solar myth which underlies so many tales. Incidentally he introduces many similar cases, and explains with great clearness — what it is not so easy to understand — in what way the rising and setting of the sun, and the course of the seasons, could so impress the minds of our early ancestors and inspire those tales which fill our literature, in “Mother Goose” as well as in the greatest tragedies and epics of the greatest poets of the world. For both Homer and Shakespeare are shown to have unconsciously followed the older traditions of the sun-god and the struggle of winter and summer, which are read now only by the light of philology. It is in this patient power of elucidation that lies Mr. Fiske’s chief merit as an expounder to the public of the works of specialists. For example, he says, p. 18 : “The same mighty power of imagination which now, restrained and guided by scientific principles, leads us to discoveries and inventions must then have wildly run in mythologic fictions whereby to explain the phenomena of nature. Knowing nothing whatever of physical forces, of the blind steadiness with which a given effect invariably follows its cause, the men of primeval antiquity could interpret the actions of nature only after the analogy of their own actions. The only force they knew was the force of which they were directly conscious,—the force of will. Accordingly, they imagined all the outward world to be endowed with volition, and to be directed by it. They personified everything,—sky, clouds, thunder, sun, moon, ocean, earthquake, whirlwind. . . . The yellow-haired sun, Phoibos, drove westerly all day in his flaming chariot ; or, perhaps, as Meleagros, retired for a while in disgust from the sight of men ; wedded at eventide the violet light (Oinone, Iole), which he had forsaken in the morning ; sank, as Herakles, upon a blazing funeral-pyre, or, like Agamemnon, perished in a blood-stained bath, or, as the fish-god, Dagon, swam nightly through the subterranean waters, to appear eastward again at daybreak. Sometimes Phaëthon, his rash, inexperienced son, would take the reins and drive the solar chariot too near the earth, causing the fruits to perish, and the grass to wither, and the wells to dry up. Sometimes, too, the great, all-seeing divinity, in his wrath at the impiety of men, would shoot down his scorching arrows, causing pestilence to spread over the land.” Following this we have some examples of the way in which this wonderful and beautiful theory has been worked out by the researches of philologists. But Mr. Fiske is far from letting this theory run away with him, as

sometimes happens to investigators in this field, and, notably, to Mr. G. W. Cox in his "Mythology of the Aryan Nations." He says elsewhere, p. 134, "It seems to me that the unguarded language of many students of mythology is liable to give rise to misapprehensions, and to discredit both the method which they employ and the results which they have obtained. If we were to give full weight to the statements which are sometimes made, we should perforce believe that primitive men had nothing to do but to ponder about the sun and the clouds, and to worry themselves over the disappearance of daylight. But there is nothing in the scientific interpretation of myths which obliges us to go any such length. I do not suppose any ancient Aryan, possessed of good digestive powers and endowed with sound common-sense, ever lay awake half the night wondering whether the sun would come back again. The child and the savage believe of necessity that the future will resemble the past, and it is only philosophy which raises doubts on the subject. The predominance of solar legends in most systems of mythology is not due to the lack of that Titanic assurance with which we say the sun *must* rise; nor, again, to the fact that the phenomena of day and night are the most striking phenomena in nature. Eclipses and earthquakes and floods are phenomena of the most terrible and astounding kind, and they have all generated myths; yet their contributions to folk-lore are scanty compared with those furnished by the strife between the day-god and his enemies. The sun-myths have been so prolific because the dramatic types to which they have given rise are of surpassing human interest. The dragon who swallows the sun is no doubt a fearful personage; but the hero who toils for others, who slays hydra-headed monsters and dries the tears of fair-haired damsels, and achieves success in spite of incredible obstacles, is a being with whom we can all sympathize, and of whom we are never weary of hearing."

These extracts will show how well Mr. Fiske is fitted for his task by the clearness of his style and the intelligence with which he criticises and sifts the testimony of enthusiastic collectors of material.

In addition to the discussion of the simpler form of sun-myth, we have a chapter on the divining-rod, which is even now, at the end of the nineteenth century, regarded with superstitious reverence by people who ought to know better; for only last December we saw an extract from a letter in the Boston Daily Advertiser, in which the writer spoke of a stream discovered by the wand, as if he were recommending a true scientific method. There is besides a very entertaining chapter on werewolves and swan-maidens, and one on the myths of the barbaric world.

Mr. Gladstone's *Juventus Mundi* has a careful criticism, in which

that eminent statesman receives the great credit he deserves for the careful study he has given to his subject, and it is also indicated how very far he is from holding correct views about the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" in those matters which have been explained by "pure and applied philology." Mr. Fiske says: "Mr. Gladstone's knowledge of the *surface* of the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey,' so to speak, is extensive and accurate. It is when he attempts to penetrate beneath the surface and survey the treasures hidden in the bowels of the earth, that he shows himself unprovided with the talisman of the wise dervise, which alone can unlock those mysteries. But modern philology is an exacting science: to approach its higher problems requires an amount of preparation sufficient to terrify at the outset all but the boldest; and a man who has had to regulate taxation, and make out financial statements, and lead a political party in a great nation may well be excused for ignorance of philology. It is difficult enough for those who have little else to do but to pore over treatises on phonetics, and thumb their lexicons, to keep fully abreast with the latest views in linguistics."

The last chapter in the volume consists of an admirable notice of that most entertaining and valuable book, Mr. Tylor's "Primitive Culture." In conclusion, we warmly commend this book to our readers as an interesting and useful exposition of the present condition of a science which has grown up very silently, but has gone very far; which concerns us all much more closely than a superficial observer might imagine. There are minor points of detail at which exception might be taken, as, for instance, Mr. Fiske's explanation that our objection to the slamming of a door is due to the traces of the old feeling that we thereby pinch a soul in it. Had that belief never existed, we fancy that we should find it equally objectionable, quite as jarring to our nerves as the upsetting of a heavy table, to which we are opposed from very good reasons which are not in the least superstitious. But this is a trifling fault.

We think a great addition to the usefulness of the volume might be made by the insertion of a list of books on all the subjects treated, similar to that given about the legend of William Tell. It might be done in a subsequent edition.

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3. — *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*. By GEORGE ELIOT.  
2 vols. New York: Harper and Brothers. 1872.

PERHAPS the first impression that forces itself upon the reader's mind after he has laid down this remarkable novel is one of profound admiration, almost of reverence, for the mind of a writer who is able